(b) and (c) Based on the data available so far and the analysis done, the Government is of the view that there is no cause for immediate concern regarding the impact of Gulf war on Indian environment. The situation is, however, being monitored closely. Specific tasks allotted to Departments for continuous monitoring and study include collection of data from local and international sources, monitoring the position of the oil slick, analysis of biological samples from marine waters and studying the weather patterns closely to detect any effect on our environment.

Foreign visits by the Minister of External Affairs for settlement of the Gulf Crisis

*68. SHRI M. M. JACOB:
DR. BAPU KALDATE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has recently visited a number of foreign countries for finding an early and peaceful settlement to the Gulf war;

(b) if so, the names of the countries which he has visited;

(c) the names of the VIPs he has met;

(d) the nature of the talks held and the outcome of the talks; and

(e) whether any progress has so far been made in the matter?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The then External Affairs Minister visited Yugoslavia from the 21st to the 23rd January. During his visit, he called on President Borisav Jovic and Prime Minister Ante Markovic and held discussions with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar. He visited Tehran on the 26th January and met President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. He again visited Belgrade on 12th February at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia to attending the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of 16 NAM countries.

(d) and (e) The talks centred round the search for an approach to bring the Gulf war to an end and restore peace in the region. Unfortunately, these efforts did not yield the desired result and ground action which we all wanted to prevent, has now commenced.

Shortage of passport books

*69. SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a shortage of Passport Books at different Passport Offices in the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government Press is not in a position to cope with the demand of the Passport Books;

(c) if so, whether there is any proposal for printing the Passport Books in a private press;

(d) the number of passport applications pending at the Regional Passport Office, Ahmedabad at present; and

(e) by when the pending applications are likely to be cleared?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) 1845 applications were pending on 15 February 1991 for want of booklets. Another 10838 applications received in recent months are under process.

(e) 8000 passport booklets were supplied to Passport Office, Ahmedabad in February 1991 and arrears will be cleared thereafter in two months.

Sino-Indian Border Dispute

*70. SHRI DHULESHWAR MEENA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the outcome of the recent talks which the Minister had held with the Chinese leaders on the Sino-Indian border dispute during his visit to Beijing;